DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 067 339 SO 004 364

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TITLE	Quality in Education: Challenge to Change.
INSTITUTION	Tufts Univ., Medford, Mass. Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs.
PUB DATE	70
NOTE	18p.; Keynote address at the 116th Annual Meeting of the Middlesex County Teachers Association on October 19, 1970
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Accountability; Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Educational Objectives; *Educational Quality; *Equal Education; Evaluation; *Human Relations; Instructional Improvement; Relevance (Education); School Responsibility; Speeches; *Teaching Quality

ABSTRACT

Four basic propositions which affect all teachers, presented in the first part of this speech, are: 1) that the prime goal of education is to advance quality of education and equality of educational opportunity; 2) that teachers and teaching are most important factors affecting quality of education for students, and that teachers can and must play a strong role in advancing equality of educational opportunity; 3) that the best chance for improving school services and processes occurs through advancement of a strong partnership between a solid state department of education and the school systems of the state; and 4) that unless the best that the state department of education and the local school system have to offer can be combined for quality and equality of educational opportunity, other patterns of decision making will control public education in our country, perhaps radically changing present systems. Each proposition is examined and commented upon. In conclusion the author calls for teacher improvement, the setting of goals, assessment, evaluation, and accountability programs for education, and strengthening of local and state systems. The second part of the speech deals with advancing democratic human relations through education. A related document is ED 063 178. (Author/SJM)

ED 067339

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Quality in Education: Challenge to Change

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SP 004 364

October 19, 1970

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Quality in Education: Challenge to Change

John S. Gibson *

The theme of my talk incorporates four basic propositions, all of which deeply affect you and me as teachers. They are as follows:

1. The most important goals in education are advancing quality of education and equality of educational opportunity for our students. In this state, and in our county, we are falling far behind on both goals.
2. Teachers and the quality of teaching are the most important factors affecting student achievement, and teachers can and must play a strong role in advancing equality of educational opportunity.
3. Combining the best that local school systems and a strong Massachusetts Department of Education have to offer toward improving school services and processes is the best

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* Keynote address by John S. Gibson, Director, The Lincoln Filene Center, Tufts University, at the 116th Annual Meeting of the Middlesex County Teachers Association on October 19, 1970.

opportunity to advance quality of education and equality of educational opportunity.

4. Unless this combination is understood and improved, intervention by the Federal Government and/or state takeover of public school education will be only two of the alternatives to the present structure of local school systems being the prime agents in shaping educational decisions in our society.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment upon and defend these four propositions, because I deeply feel that all of them affect our mutual professional obligations and our opportunities for striving toward the potential of our professional careers.

A. The Four Propositions

I do not feel that I must work hard to defend proposition #1 - that the prime goal of education is to advance quality of education and equality of educational opportunity for the young people in our schools.

Our studies in the realms of public school education reveal that many educators seem to establish goals and obligations that appear to be far removed from the well-being of students and student advancement in the domains of the schools. Unless we focus on our real mission--the young people in our schools--we simply lose sight of what education is all about. We are on the record in saying that quality in education is seeking to maximize the potential of the student

to advance toward five dimensions of quality--human quality, quality of skills, quality of knowledge, quality of learning, and civic quality. We stress the individual and his potential, and we reject standardization in assessment, instruction, and all other standardized and homogenized approaches to students. Each one is different, and we hold with Thoreau that if man does not keep pace with his companions, it is because he hears a different drummer. But the drummer can maximize that potential, and in all areas, not only in skills and knowledge.

We can cite much data which say that in our county, in the Commonwealth, and in the nation, there is much that we can do and must do to advance that quality of education for our young people. We can also present much data which say that there are profound differences in opportunities for young people to have access to quality in education and equality of educational opportunity. We shall not cite towns, cities, and thus school systems. But we must recognize that we are not doing the job we should be doing in helping young people to enjoy the thrill of discovery and of learning, the attainment of quality in education, and thus the opportunity to achieve in life.

We can supply the hard facts that the quality of school services and processes directly relate to student achievement and that student achievement directly relates to life opportunities and options. If you read James Guthrie and his associates' fine work, Schools and Inequality, you can examine these facts and data at first hand. The central point is that quality of education and equality of educational opportunity for our young people in the schools is our essential mission, and we are not pursuing this mission as we should.

Secondly, proposition #2 - teachers and teaching are the most important factors affecting quality of education for students, and teachers can and must play a strong role in advancing equality of educational opportunity.

The Guthrie study and many others confirm the profound role of the teacher in affecting student performance, for better or worse. Guthrie supplies the positive evidence about the teacher and teaching. The data are strong about correlations between the preservice and inservice training of the teacher and student performance, about teacher expectations of student success and students actually succeeding, about student access to the teacher and achievement, about student participation in the teaching-learning process and student performance, about individualizing instruction and achievement, about options for students in the classroom and the community and their performance, and so on.

On the negative side, we have the horror books about what teachers do to and with students that condemn them to a whirlpool of defeat, distress, and disgust with the school and all that goes with it. Some of the horror stories are based on inadequate and impressionistic observations, while others are based on solid fact and experience.

There is both humor and pathos in these positive and negative experiences. A Middlesex teacher told me about both that happened to her this past week. She teaches French in the eighth grade, and after much effort, encouraged her students to learn a French song in her class. They really hit the notes and loved it - and learned some French. They sang on and on, and the bell rang.

They went out of the class and continued their singing in the corridors of the school. However, they were immediately confronted by a school official who issued an order to all of the students to stay in detention hall after the end of the school day for disorderly conduct.

The point is that on the one hand, the students were learning and enjoyed learning through cheer and music - through a loving teacher and a medium for expressing themselves. On the other hand, they were punished for being happy and enjoying a great educational experience. Can one blame them for being turned off with respect to the school and school people?

Children innately are curious. They want to discover, to inquire, and to be happy. The extent that teachers and school officials motivate students with respect to these processes is the extent to which they will learn and want to continue to learn. The extent to which they are turned off to these processes is the extent to which the school fails in advancing their performance and achievement. We disagree with Coleman that the school cannot affect students independent of their backgrounds, families, and environments. Children do not come to school as failures; it is the school which fails students. And it is the teacher who must double his or her efforts to help students to achieve, irrespective of all the forces to the contrary.

On the plus side, the teacher must be intelligent, warm, sensitive, innovative, and human. He or she must receive - and demand - the requirements for the professional person--solid compensation; perquisites; support for inservice

education, sabbaticals, and other measures for self-improvement; and administrative backing for innovations. Because it is true that the teacher is the most important factor relating to quality in education, the teacher deserves the support that is necessary to permit him or her to be a true professional. Without this support, quality in education is meaningless.

With respect to equality of educational opportunity, this Association, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and your other professional organizations must take strong and irreversible stands in reducing the barriers to educational opportunity in our county, in the Commonwealth, and in the nation. Teachers' organizations must be a far more powerful force than they are at present in insisting that the quality of teaching anywhere and everywhere must be improved, that certification and upward mobile processes of teachers must be strengthened, and that all the other school services and processes must be geared to opening the doors everywhere for students to have equal access to educational opportunity.

This calls for changes in state aid formulas, for more Federal support to education, and for more ways to accommodate the needs of different kinds of students, such as the thousands of young Spanish-speaking people in Boston who cannot achieve anything in the schools because they cannot speak or understand English. It is not enough for you to talk about wages, hours, and certification. You must demand components of quality that affect all areas of education, and of course, you must demand support from school administrators and school boards toward those ends.

If you truly believe in quality in education, there is much you can do and much you must press upon others to do. Like so much else in life, we all must have the courage to change that which must be changed, to have the serenity to live with that which we cannot change, and to have the wisdom to know the difference.

Our proposition #3 - that the best opportunity we have for improving school services and processes is advancing a strong partnership between a solid Massachusetts Department of Education and the school systems of the state is set forth in our recent study of the Massachusetts Department of Education. In our study, our five basic recommendations call for a far greater capacity by the Department to hire and retain, and promote people of high calibre; to strengthen internal operations within the Department; to emphasize Department leadership and services of genuine and demonstrable quality; to organize regional offices that directly can serve teachers and schools; and to concentrate on a program of educational goals, assessment of student performance, evaluation of school processes and services, and accountability by all educational decision makers to the publics they serve, including students.

We seek your support for these proposals, which are now being translated into action and into legislation to be submitted to the General Court. It is most heartening to note that the Massachusetts Teachers Association, among many others, has endorsed and will support these proposals and legislation. It is disappointing, however, to observe a number of areas of conspicious silence about

our recommendations for strengthening the Department, especially from those who would appear to benefit most from our recommendations.

The fifth and last recommendation of our study deals with goals, assessment, evaluation, and accountability. We all must join in better articulating educational goals for students. Without goals, we have no ideals toward which to strive, no strategies for getting to where we would like to see students take themselves, and no means to measure what we are doing. Earlier I stressed the fact that goals for educational quality should focus on maximizing student potential in five dimensions of quality, but certainly others have views about goals, and all of us should join in an exciting dialogue on this critical area of education.

The Department of Education will embark on a student assessment program early next year, but I would hope that the standardized measures would be supplemented by instruments that deal with students as individuals rather than digits. Other state departments have worked for years in this area, and it is about time that we do the same. We need to utilize the many means we have at our disposal to assess school processes and services. I can assure you that effective and reliable instruments are available to see how well you and I are doing as teachers; how effective (or not!) instructional resources, media, and curricula are in advancing student achievement; and how the innovative approaches, such as individualized instruction and differential staffing, really are having an impact on students. It is about time we quit hiding behind the smoke screen of inadequate means to assess students and evaluate ourselves and our educational processes

and get down to the business of measuring what we and the schools are or are not doing to, for, and with our young people.

Specifically, the advent of performance contracting is something that should give us all as teachers reason to assess ourselves. As you know, performance contracting means that someone comes to the school and says that if you give me a piece of the action in the schools, I will prove to you that I can do it better than you are doing. If I do, you pay me in proportion to my success. If I fail, do not pay me at all. Educational commercial enterprises and publishing firms have taken the lead here when, indeed, it seems to me that the teacher associations should have taken the initiative in performance contracting. To go further, I feel that school boards and administrators should always have provided awards for quality teacher performances, although it has not been until recent years that adequate measures for performance have been developed.

We explore performance contracting in some detail in the appendix to Chapter III on our report on the Massachusetts Department of Education. Performance contracting got off to a slow start several years ago, but during this present academic year, there are many performance contracts in all parts of the nation. This year's effort will be closely appraised by the Rand Corporation, and I submit to you that by this time next year, we shall have some solid data on what these contractors have or have not proven.

The main point is this. If a performance contractor can prove that his program in a school system - say, in the primary reading program - far

out-performs what the school is traditionally doing in primary reading and at a cost equal or less than what the school is paying per capita student, then, teacher, watch out! You can imagine how appealing this will be to the local taxpayer and parents of students and what this might portend to teachers who implicitly or explicitly feel that performance is not a part of their own contract. Is it not about time that all of us seek to write quality performance into our contracts and insist that our professional associations do the same?

When we get to accountability, all the goals, assessments, and evaluations can get wrapped up into our giving an accounting to the publics we serve - especially our students - for what we are doing as professional educators. Some fear accountability, and others say that accountability is so uncertain and lacking in clarity that it will never come across as a viable program at the local, state, and Federal level. I beg to differ. Accountability programs will take some time to develop, but the handwriting is on the wall. The instruments and measures, including performance contracting and a number of statewide assessement and evaluation programs such as those in Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Vermont, to name a few, lead me to believe that accountability will grow from its infantile status as a slogan today to a virile and mature process and procedure tomorrow and that tomorrow will be in only a few years. Let us accept it, believe in it, work to make it work for us, and feel that we can give a fine accounting for what we are doing in our schools.

We worked long and hard on our study of the Massachusetts Department

of Education with the firm conviction that a stronger Department serving you and your systems can provide the best opportunity for advancing quality in education and equality of educational opportunity. Again, we solicit your support for our recommendations, and we are grateful for what the Massachusetts Teachers Association and individual teachers have done to translate our proposals into educational policy.

But this brings us to proposition #4 - that unless we can combine the best that the State Department of Education and the local school systems have to offer for quality and equality of educational opportunity for students, other patterns of decision making will control public education in our county, in the state, and in the nation. Three alternatives to a strong state-local combination are Federal intervention and control, state domination, and/or nonpublic enterprises.

Federal intervention and control could mean that the Federal courts and/or the Executive Branch of the Federal Government could come on the scene strongly on the grounds that local systems and state governments are not guaranteeing students equal protection of the law. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution calls upon the states to provide equal protection of the laws for their citizens. A student in an inferior school district is not getting equal protection of the laws if he receives demonstrable inequal school services and processes.

If you read the Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka Supreme Court decision of 1954 carefully and many other decisions of the Federal courts since that time with respect to the inadequacies of education in the areas of race

and the socioeconomic status of students, you will have reason to believe that the above proposition is not a fantasy. Our staff at the Lincoln Filene Center has been deeply involved in Southern desegregation problems and in Southern school districts, and we know at first hand the Federal Government's role in affecting school structures, services, and processes under Court orders. This has happened and is happening largely because those school systems have not done what has been reasonably expected of them to provide quality and equality of educational opportunity for students. I agree with those who say that the South is not the only area of the nation that is guilty of shortchanging students in quality and equal opportunities. I predict that unless we in the rest of the nation take measures to advance in a genuine manner the dual concepts of quality and equality, we may well expect the Federal Government to make the decisions for us that we should have made long ago and must make now.

I would hope that it would not be necessary to witness the advent of powerful Federal intervention in education decision making, but I would not object to the advent of that force if we cannot accept the responsibility for making the critical and crucial decisions ourselves. That is why we call for the dynamic and creative relationships of departments of education and local school systems in advancing quality and equality of education for students. The emotional and searing situations we have experienced in the South have made us realize that unless we move immediately toward bringing the realities of educational promise for our students closer to the ideals of democracy and equality in our schools as expressed

in the Constitution and Federal court decisions, we can well expect the Federal Government virtually to make us do what we should have been doing all along.

Secondly, the present opportunity we have to advance quality and equality of education for our students may be affected by claims that local school systems, supported by local property taxes, should be relieved by the state's taking over the cost of public school education. This situation is especially bad in Massachusetts, a state that ranks fifth in per capita income per public school student and forty-ninth in per capita expenditure per public school student. The appeal of the Commonwealth's assuming the costs of the schools is strong; however, the consequences for you and me would be profound. Power goes where money goes. Such areas as teacher contract negotiations, curriculum, and other vital school matters would not be on a local basis but would be concentrated in state government and state educational associations. The vital concept of local-state partner ship would be lost.

In the third place, another alternative to our conviction about a strong local-state association would be many patterns of nonpublic school structures. Community-administered schools, schools administered by commercial enterprises (an extension of performance contracting), and structures of education based on educational technology - especially television cassettes and orbiting satellites - are all distinct possibilities. We are not indulging in Alice in Wonderland or Buck Rogers stories here. We are merely saying that to assume that the present system can crank along with a business-as-usual philosophy is daydreaming.

On the other hand, any or all of these alternatives may be better than the present system and establishment. We simply do not know. What we do know is that by 1970, we have the knowledge and the means to improve greatly the long-standing structure of partnership between local decision making and state authority in public school education. Unless we avail ourselves of the opportunity to uplift ourselves as teachers and to demand that uplifting of others; unless we move toward a goals, assessment, evaluation, and accountability program for education; and unless we strengthen to great degrees local and state partnership in public education, we can well expect that the demands of our students, their parents, taxpayers, and others will lead to other forms of educational decision making that might well radically change the educational system as we know it today. This may be for the good or for the bad, but because we know what we are, what we can be, and what we can become, I would hope that together we can support the concept of local-state partnership and vision for our professional stake in ourselves and in our young people.

B. Advancing Democratic Human Relations Through Education

Finally, I should like to add a few brief comments about an area of education that is most essential to our work at the Lincoln Filene Center--advancing democratic human relations through education. We have long recommended a review of the Commonwealth's racial imbalance law, and we are pleased that the Massachusetts Department of Education is indeed undertaking that review. It has also long been our conviction that the schools should be integrated, although

we place the supreme value of uplifting quality in education for students wherever they are. But any program for balancing schools, for demanding certain ratios or percentages of racial mix, or for providing compensatory school processes and services must be accompanied by significant programs for helping teachers to know about and to value the richness of diversity in American life, past and present; the need for sensitivity to all kinds of students; and the need for students to participate in the process of discovery and examination of samenesses and differences in the human being and spirit. New York's Commissioner of Education, Dr. Ewald B. Nyquist, reminds us that:

> . . . integrated education . . . is a series of experiences in which the child learns that he lives in a multi-racial society, in a multi-racial world which is largely non-white, non-democratic, and non-Christian, a world in which no race can choose to live apart in isolation or be quarantined by the rest. It is one that teaches him to judge individuals for what they are rather than by what group they belong to. From this viewpoint, he learns that differences among peoples are not as great as similarities, and that difference is a source of richness and value rather than a thing to be feared and denied. And these things can be taught in every classroom even where all children are of the same color, class, and creed. Integration thus can occur anywhere.

Irrespective, then, of the degree to which the schools are physically integrated, it is imperative that the processes of education in the school be integrated. We have devoted considerable effort toward that end, and you and your systems have joined us in this effort. Our intergroup relations inservice program for teachers, sponsored by Wayland and other systems, has at least opened the

doors toward more effective and sensitive teaching and learning about democratic human relations. All of us must redouble our efforts to advance the cause of integration through our work in the classroom and by better understanding ourselves, our colleagues, and our students.

Other approaches toward more viable integrated education programs organized along regional lines include those through and with the Leagues of Women Voters, Parent-Teacher Associations, and other groups concerned about these issues. Using all kinds of community and regional resources as laboratories for learning and for student examination of sameness and difference within the community and region is also recommended. Taking inventories on what local and regional school systems are or are not doing in this area and generating local and regional support for political and public action for effective change in integrated education are also another force for change.

This is, of course, making many demands upon all of us; however, it is abundantly clear that if we really are committed to a democratic and integrated society today and tomorrow, we cannot do less. Indeed, we must do more. We cannot foist off on the schools laws and policies which seek to bring about integration in our society unless we are prepared to make significant headway in housing, employment, and plain democratic human relations in all dimensions of our lives. We cannot ask the schools to be the only instrument of change unless all of us are prepared to give the schools strong support and unless we open up all doors to racial progress and understanding. The schools can do nothing for and with young

people if students return after school to environments of prejudice and bigotry in their homes and communities at large or to deprivation and inequality in their lives. More learning in human relations takes place out of the school than within, and unless our efforts to build a finer and more democratic society in all walks of life are not firm and effective, then what we ask the schools to do in this area will be of little or no avail.

If we join forces in this endeavor, then we can share the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., which he articulated so beautifully shortly before the tragic ending of his life.

> And so I can still sing, although many have stopped singing it, "We shall overcome." We shall overcome because the arch of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right, "No lie can live forever." We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again." We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right, "Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways a future." And so with this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. We will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. This will be a great day. This will not be the day of the white man, it will not be the day of the black man, it will be the day of man as man.